

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

NOVEMBER 2005

TWO DOLLARS





Colonel W. Gerald Massengill Interim Director

Many of you may have heard by now that there was a documented case of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in a deer in West Virginia that was confirmed in early September. As this magazine goes to press, this is the southern most confirmed case of CWD in the eastern United States. The white-tailed deer came from Hampshire County, West Virginia, approximately 10 miles from the Virginia state line adjacent to Frederick County. The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) activated its Chronic Wasting Disease Response Plan immediately and has offered support to the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources.

The Department has had a comprehensive CWD surveillance strategy in place since 2002, and has aggressively monitored Virginia's deer herd statewide for CWD, and has found no trace of the disease in Virginia. Any confirmed case of CWD within 50 miles of Virginia activates the CWD Response Plan. Department wildlife biologists and staff wildlife veterinarian had previously identified this region as a high risk for CWD exposure due to the presence of captive deer facilities in neighboring states, including West Virginia. The Department had already planned to implement increased CWD testing in Virginia in that region this fall.

CWD is a progressive neurological (brain and nervous system) disease found in deer and elk. In early stages of infection, animals do not show any symptoms. In later stages, infected animals begin to display abnormal behavior such as staggering or standing with very poor posture. Animals may have an exaggerated wide posture or carry the head and ears lowered, and may drool. Infected animals become emaciated (thus the name Chronic Wasting Disease) and appear in very poor body condition. The disease ultimately results in death. Species known to be susceptible include elk, moose, mule deer, white-tailed deer, and black-tailed deer.



The World Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have conducted investigations into any relationship between CWD and human neurological diseases and have found no scientific evidence that CWD has been transmitted humans.

With hunting season in full swing I would like to remind everyone concern for CWD is no reason not to go afield this season. In fact, hunters across the state continue to help the Department with their CWD monitoring process and by alerting us of deer that show unusual behavior. Without sampling the entire deer population, Virginia's deer herd cannot be declared absolutely free of CWD. Even so, the Department's surveillance efforts provide a high degree of confidence that CWD is not present in Virginia's deer herd. Also compared to many other states, Virginia lacks several significant risk factors typically associated with CWD; in particular, steps have been taken to address CWD risk factors associated with captive deer in Virginia. The Department also advises that hunters may wish to follow a few simple precautions when handling or transporting deer carcasses.

The number one objective of the Department in the management of CWD is preventing its spread into Virginia. The Department is committed to providing accurate and timely information about CWD to deer hunters and the general public through news releases, pamphlets, magazine articles and other media outlets. The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries will not let its guard down with regard to CWD and that is why I ask that all Virginians continue to be vigilant and work to keep CWD out of Virginia.

For updated information about CWD, visit the Department's Web site at [www.dgf.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov). To report deer that may show CWD symptoms contact the Department by calling 1-804-367-1258 or the nearest Department office.

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Virginia Wildlife (ISSN 0042 6792) is published monthly by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Send all subscription orders and address changes to *Virginia Wildlife*, P. O. Box 7477, Red Oak, Iowa 51591-0477. Address all other communication concerning this publication to *Virginia Wildlife*, P. O. Box 11104, 4010 West Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia 23230-1104. Subscription rates are \$12.95 for one year, \$23.95 for two years; \$2.00 per each back issue, subject to availability. Out-of-country rate is \$24.95 for one year and must be paid in U.S. funds. No refunds for amounts less than \$5.00. To subscribe, call toll-free (800) 710-9369. Postmaster: Please send all address changes to *Virginia Wildlife*, P.O. Box 7477, Red Oak, Iowa 51591-0477. Postage fees periodically paid at Richmond, Virginia and additional entry offices.

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Mission Statement

To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth; to provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation; to promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing.

Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources

NOVEMBER CONTENTS

About the cover:
The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is cooperating with Cornell University and the Atlantic Flyway states of Maryland, Pennsylvania and North Carolina in a study to better assess the migration patterns and winter ecology of tundra swans. Scientists are trying to determine when tundra swans breed, where they go in the winter, what kinds of habitats they use, and their survival rates in Virginia and along the Atlantic Flyway.

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WILDLIFE**

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4 An Answered Prayer by Ken Perrotte

Unintended consequences turn an ordinary hunting trip into a treasured memory.

9 Buck Fever Blunders by Gerald Almy

Ten simple steps on how to avoid a dreadful deer hunting season.

15 Virginia Wildlife Outdoor Catalog

Unique gifts for the outdoor lover this holiday season.

23 Creating Wildlife Habitat by Tee Clarkson

For one local conservationist turning a "sow's ear into a silk purse" is the perfect solution for creating new wildlife habitat.

26 So, What's For Dinner? by Bruce Ingram

Part II: Improve your turkey hunting skills this fall by learning what they like to eat.

31 NOVEMBER JOURNAL

33 Recipes

Don't Waste That Deer Heart or Liver

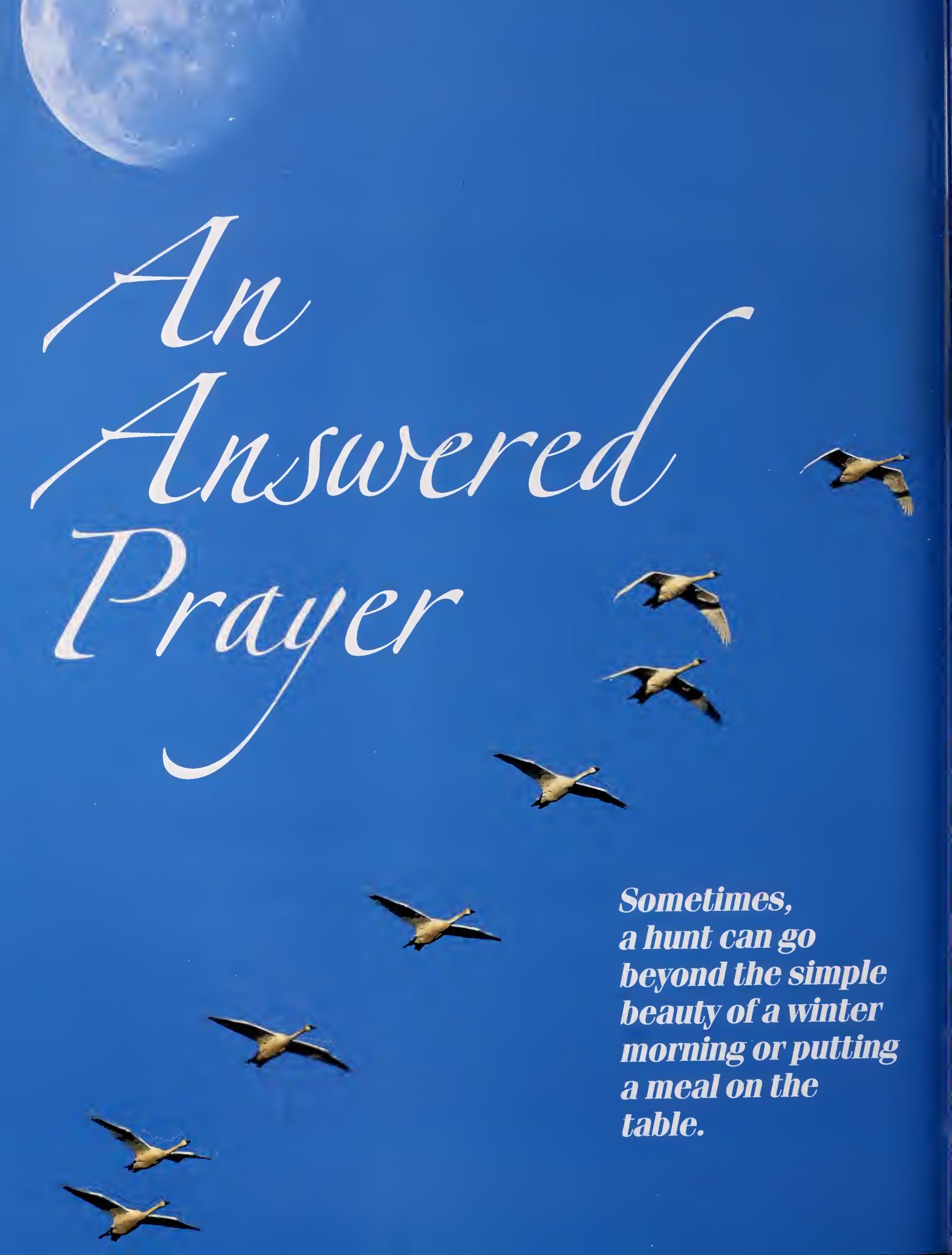
34 On the Water

Cold Boating Gear

35 Naturally Wild

Common Merganser

An Answered Prayer



**Sometimes,
a hunt can go
beyond the simple
beauty of a winter
morning or putting
a meal on the
table.**



by Ken Perrotte

Bobby Woolfolk's aging Browning "Auto 5" 12-gauge shotgun betrays its years upon close inspection. The barrel and receiver have lost much of the bluing and the walnut stock has the dings, scratches and character marks representative of a shotgun that spent many days afield in all kinds of weather.

The shotgun has taken scores of upland birds and waterfowl since Woolfolk bought it new in 1978—"back when I was young and had a little money before I got married," he joked.

Many hunters today trade their old waterfowl hunting guns, chambered for the seemingly ancient standard of shotgun shells measuring 2 3/4 inches, for new magnums capable of firing Roman candle-sized 3 1/2-inch loads. Woolfolk, though, has had too long and productive a relationship with his gun to retire it in the closet.

The Woolfolks of Louisa County grew up hunting. Bobby and his brother Lanny both earned degrees in Forestry and Wildlife from Virginia Tech, and Bobby had begun taking his teenage son Ryan to the field regularly in recent years. Avid goose and duck hunters, they also applied for the limited tundra swan permits

available each year and, on December 31, 2003, 16-year-old Ryan got his first of the big white birds.

Keith Cheatham, of Chesterfield, was Bobby's roommate at Tech for a year in 1973 and they've remained lifelong friends and hunting buddies. Cheatham said Ryan's obvious shared enthusiasm for his dad's outdoor gusto was a source of pride to Woolfolk. Having a child who shares your love of the outdoors and the traditions of hunting is a dream of many parents.

An anticipated future of sharing times afield for many years to come was lost one dreadful afternoon in May, 2004 when Ryan, who had just turned 17 years old, tragically died in an automobile accident.

Months later, standing in a sprawling Essex County farm field opening during the first minutes of morning light on New Year's Eve, Woolfolk told the small group gathered to hunt geese and swans that he'd like to dedicate this hunt to Ryan.

Swan Management

Virginia issues 600 swan permits annually and, according to Woolfolk, some 250 to 300 reports come in each year from successful hunters. North Carolina issues 5,000 permits and estimates that up to 75,000 swans migrate to the northeastern portion of the state each winter. With about 100,000 birds migrating in the eastern United States, the remainder are scat-



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Upper left: After more than 25 years, Bobby Woolfolk still relies on his trusted Browning Auto 5, 12 gauge shotgun for pursuing waterfowl. Above: The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, along with federal, state and international partners are actively involved in a cooperative management plan for tundra swans. Gary Costanzo, a waterfowl biologist with the Department bands and collects important information about the health and population density of tundra swans in Virginia at Hog Island Wildlife Management Area.



©Dwight Dyke

tered in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware and New Jersey.

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has been engaged in a cooperative study for a number of years with Cornell University and other Atlantic Flyway states of Maryland, Pennsylvania and North Carolina to learn more about migration patterns and winter habits of tundra swans, including types of habitat the birds use, the routes they fly and their survival rates.

Hunters play a role in this study by reporting how they fared in trying to take a swan and, more importantly,



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by reporting when a collected bird was wearing either a leg band or neck collar. This allows researchers to compare where a bird was killed to where it was originally captured and banded.

Swans were trapped and banded in January-March 2001, in the states participating in the study, according to the Department. Besides employing leg bands, neck-collars, and conventional radio transmitters, small numbers of female swans were

Top: Bob Gregory sets up trash bag swan decoys as a glorious sunrise develops on the eastern horizon. Above left: Keith Cheatham scans the horizon as the sun rises, looking and listening for the first calls of either Canada geese or tundra swans. Above right: Bobby Woolfolk and his retriever Sandy nestle into a drainage depression between two fields frequented by tundra swans.

equipped with satellite transmitters, which enabled long-distance tracking of birds beyond the Mid-Atlantic.

Birds on Schedule

Woolfolk and Bob Gregory, a Virginian whose job has relocated him to New Jersey, each had drawn swan permits. Everybody else would have to be content with an opportunity to collect a Canada goose, the early season limit being just a single bird per person.

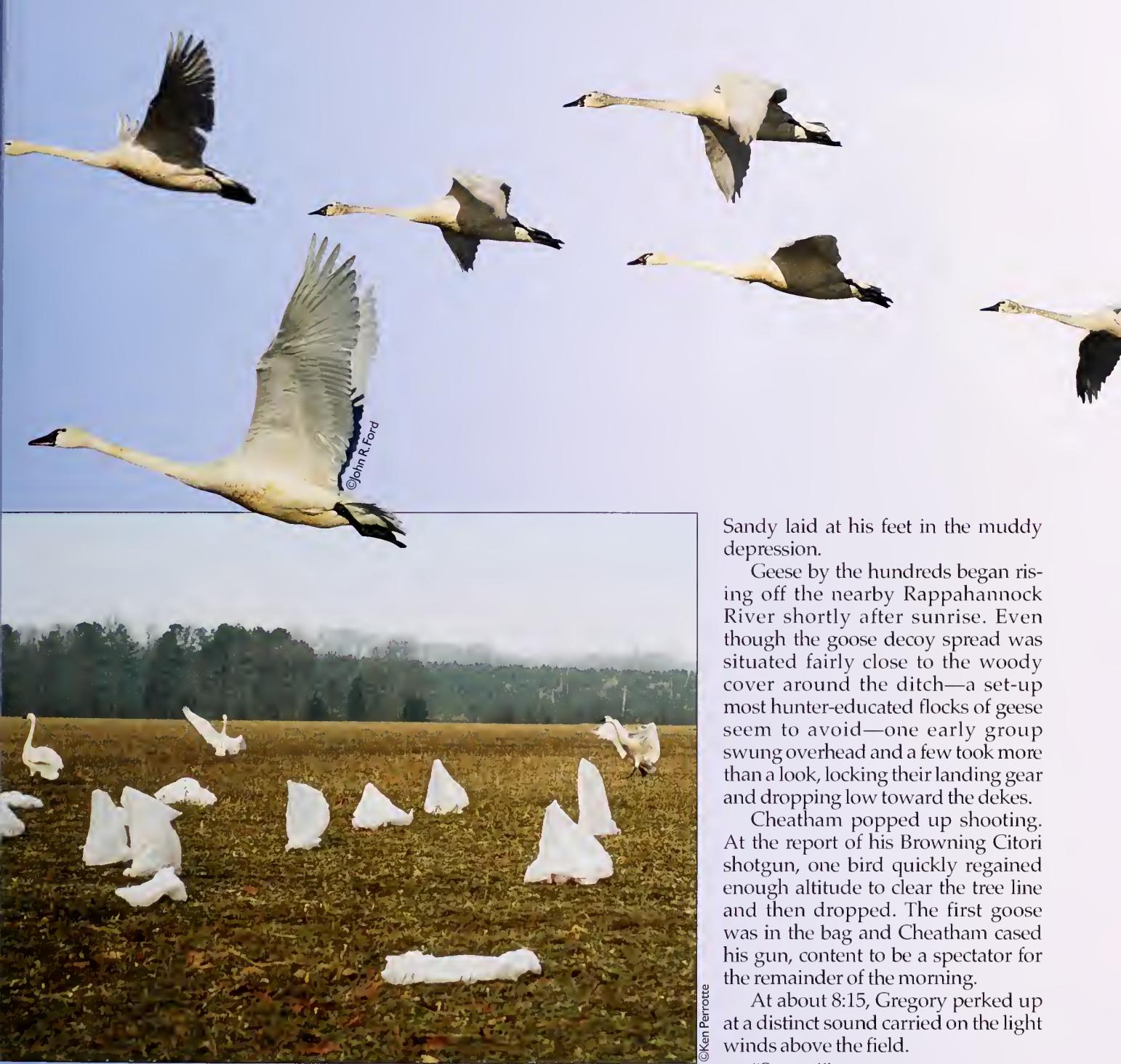
The hunters busily began setting out decoys while the sun rose spectacularly over the river and the group wondered aloud if conditions might be too "blue-birdy" for a productive



©Ken Perrotte

hunt. The goose decoys, a mix of 3-dimensional shells mixed with high definition silhouettes, were placed only about 50 yards away from the spread of white kitchen trash bags that comprised the swan decoys.

"This is my \$2.99 decoy spread," Woolfolk yelled out with a laugh. Some were simply laid on the ground and anchored with a small rock, while others were hung over sticks stuck into the muddy earth of the soybean stubble field.



Sandy laid at his feet in the muddy depression.

Geese by the hundreds began rising off the nearby Rappahannock River shortly after sunrise. Even though the goose decoy spread was situated fairly close to the woody cover around the ditch—a set-up most hunter-educated flocks of geese seem to avoid—one early group swung overhead and a few took more than a look, locking their landing gear and dropping low toward the dekes.

Cheatham popped up shooting. At the report of his Browning Citori shotgun, one bird quickly regained enough altitude to clear the tree line and then dropped. The first goose was in the bag and Cheatham cased his gun, content to be a spectator for the remainder of the morning.

At about 8:15, Gregory perked up at a distinct sound carried on the light winds above the field.

"Swans!"

The birds quickly appeared overhead, the sound of the wind rushing over their large wingspreads audible on the ground, their distinctive calls answered by Woolfolk and Gregory.

Tundra swans used to be referred to as "whistling swans," not for their calls, but for the sound of the wind whistling over their wings. Although impressive in length and wingspread, at average weights of 14 to 16 pounds, the average swan only weighs about

"This particular field has been old reliable," he said. "We've gotten our swan every time we've hunted here except for one."

The group has also successfully hunted the birds at Hog Island and Back Bay in past years.

A scouting expedition to the field a couple days earlier yielded the observation that swans were flying overhead beginning at 8:20 a.m.

"They tend to fly a little bit later and lit-

Tundra swans land on the outside edge of the simple, white trash bag decoys. As they dropped in they quickly learned that they had landed amid a flock of something considerably less than the real deal.

tle bit longer than the geese," Woolfolk explained.

Decoys set, the hunters moved into a nearby ditch that sported a number of windbreak trees and a tangle of briars and vines. Woolfolk's 2-year-old, yellow Labrador retriever



Bobby Woolfolk, left, accepts Bob Gregory's congratulations upon taking a banded swan during their New Year's Eve hunt in Essex County. The swan had been banded in Aulander, N. C., in 1999. It was a male that was at least two years old at the time it was banded. For Woolfolk that swan represented an answered prayer.

the same as some of the larger Canada goose subspecies.

The group made several slow circles, checking out the situation before deciding to attempt a landing.

The closest tundra swan was barely 15 to 20 yards in front of Woolfolk, just a few feet off the ground and heading left to right. At the shot, the bird crumpled into the decoys and Sandy was on it within seconds, attempting to make a retrieve.

Gregory, with the apparent predatory eyesight of a hawk, called out, "I think I saw something on the leg of that bird."

Running toward the decoys, both hunters excitedly exclaimed, "It's got a leg band."

Picking up the swan, Woolfolk exclaimed, "This one is for you Ryan!" □

Ken Perrotte is a writer and outdoor columnist for the Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star and lives in King George County.

Note: For more on the Tundra Swan Cooperative Study, see www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/swan/index.html.

Virginia hunting is permitted in all counties and portions of counties lying east of U.S. Route I-95 and south of the Prince William/Stafford county line in Chopawamsic Creek at Quantico Marine Corps Base. The season lasts from December 1, 2005 through January 31, 2006, with a bag limit of one per person per day by permit.

"A Note from Above"

The Woolfolks have either hunted for tundra swans or accompanied others holding hunting permits for some 20 years and this banded bird was the first they'd ever encountered.

Swans and geese flew steadily throughout the morning and Gregory collected his bird about an hour later.

Woolfolk softly told the hunting group as the decoys were being collected and stowed, "This hunt was more than I could have ever expected; between the fellowship, the geese, and the swans—a banded swan at that.

"Last night, I had prayed, that if we were fortunate enough to get a swan, please let it be banded or collared. That band was a note from up above—an answered prayer."



Buck Fever

Blunders

Improve your odds this hunting season by learning how to avoid ten of the most common deer hunting mistakes.

by Gerald Almy

S

uccess in deer hunting comes from many things, including having a good area to hunt, using the right tactics, putting in long hours, and plain old-fashion luck. But often the secret to success boils down to simply this: not making mistakes.

I have plenty of experience with this topic. With over 30 years of deer hunting in Virginia, I believe I've made every mistake a hunter can, some of them many times over. But gradually, over time, I've also learned from these tactical and strategic errors, and I've become a better hunter because of it. While there are countless flub ups you can make while pursuing whitetails, these ten are some of the most common pitfalls. Learn to avoid them and you'll not only become a better deer hunter, but also draw deeper enjoyment from the sport.



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Above: Scouting the area that you plan to hunt before the season opens is always a good idea. Below and right: Sighting in your gun and making sure that you use quality optics is well worth the time and investment.

1. Not getting far enough away from high-pressured areas.

This is sometimes hard to do. If you hunt on a small plot of private land, you can't control the pressure around you. But if you hunt on a large parcel or on public land, getting away from the crowds can pay big dividends. It may not be necessary if you're content to harvest a doe or young buck. But for those interested in seeking out a buck in the three year or older class, you'll do wise to focus on areas that are not hunted heavily.

This may require hiking in several miles or climbing rough, steep mountainsides to get to neglected areas.



©Dwight Dyke

Other times it can simply mean finding small pockets of thick cover with food and water nearby that are ignored or overlooked by other hunters because they seem unlikely or too small.

It doesn't take much of an area to hold a big buck in hunting season if the cover is thick enough. If you can't find remote spots or small neglected areas, be sure to consider the effect other hunters have on deer movements. Know where parking areas are, where the most popular hunting spots are, and hike in to thicker, rougher areas nearby that savvy old bucks might flee to when the onslaught of hunting pressure begins. Be there at first light, waiting. High-elevation areas, swamps, dense thickets...all are spots where deer are likely to flee to when pressure builds.

2. Not dressing warmly enough.

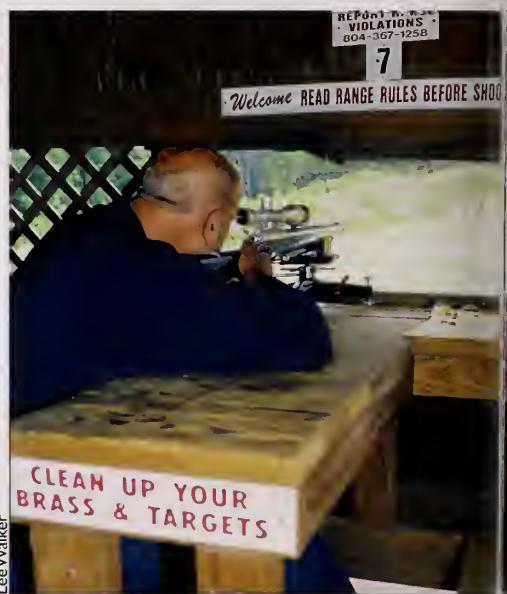
We all know the disheartening feeling. You're trying to concentrate on the woods and fields around you, searching for your quarry, but gradually the cold starts to overwhelm all thoughts. You shiver, try to fight it off, but can't. Your feet start to grow numb. Face muscles stiffen. Shudders convulse through your body uncontrollably.

Other times rain might be the culprit. It wasn't predicted, but down it

came—in buckets. Without the raingear you left back at camp, you were soon soaked through to the bone, unable to continue hunting.

Neither cold nor rain should stop you from enjoying a hunting trip. But without the right clothing, they can bring the strongest hunters to their knees. Even if you can stick it out, it no longer becomes fun if you're wet or cold or both. It's just an endurance test, and you may well miss the shot because you are shivering when you do see a buck.

Wear synthetics for underwear that wick moisture away from your body, then either layer more proven synthetics on or use wool for your



outer garments. Wool can become wet and still hold much of its insulating, warming value. If rain is expected, carry quality raingear such as Gore-Tex or other newer products that both repel moisture and breathe. Finally, remember to dress in layers so you can remove some clothing if the weather improves.

3. Not practicing enough.

Whether you shoot a bow, rifle, shotgun or muzzleloader, it's vital to invest enough time to become the best shot possible. Far too much effort is required to get into clean shooting



or blind location, we often throw caution to the wind because it's where we wanted to hunt. This is almost sure to ruin your chances—unless the wind suddenly shifts in your favor after you get set up.

Wearing scent-eliminating clothing is a big help, and sprays are available that can be used on boots and equipment to remove odors. Special non-scent soaps are made for use on bodies and hair. But even if you take all these steps, you can't eliminate your human scent 100 percent. And just a faint whiff of "man scent" spells danger to both wary does and older bucks.

The key is to try to control your scent, but still keep wind direction foremost in mind and never hunt a stand if the breeze is blowing towards the quarry or where it will come from. Sometimes, admittedly, this is difficult to pin down. Last year it seemed every time I decided on a stand, by the time I started to set up there, the wind was swirling in a different direction. If that happens, simply sneak out and move to another better location.



©Dwight Dyke

Top: Not paying attention to wind direction and scent control can really stink up a hunt. Stay alert and keep your composure when that big deer appears out of nowhere. Also make sure before you pull the trigger that you have a clear shooting lane and know what is beyond your target.

distance of a buck to waste it all because you miss what should be an easy shot. Certainly we all miss occasionally, but if you miss quite often or miss shots that should be fairly simple, it's time to hit the range. Make sure your bow is tuned and accurate and your firearm sighted in precisely, then practice, practice, practice.

Try different ranges, positions and angles. Even experienced hunters need practice to keep the muscles in tone, eye coordination and concentration at peak levels.

21. Neglecting wind direction and scent control.

Even veteran hunters sometimes forget how crucial the sense of scent is to a whitetail's survival. Doing so, however, is a sure way to ruin a hunt. This sense may be even more important to a deer than its eyes or ears. Sometimes, though, we forget that in our desire to hunt a particular stand

5. Not approaching your stand carefully enough.

This is a common mistake, and it often comes from just not allowing enough time. Too many hunters hurt their chances of seeing their quarry by hurrying through the woods to the chosen location, breaking branches, scuffing leaves and walking through areas deer are in.

Proper pre-hunt planning can help you avoid this mistake. Before opening day arrives, analyze how you want to approach each stand or blind location you have. Take into consideration things such as prevailing wind direction, where the deer are likely to be when you enter the stand and where you expect them to appear from once you are in place and hunting.

Choose a route that doesn't take you through areas they are in before daylight. This may mean a longer hike than a direct path would involve,

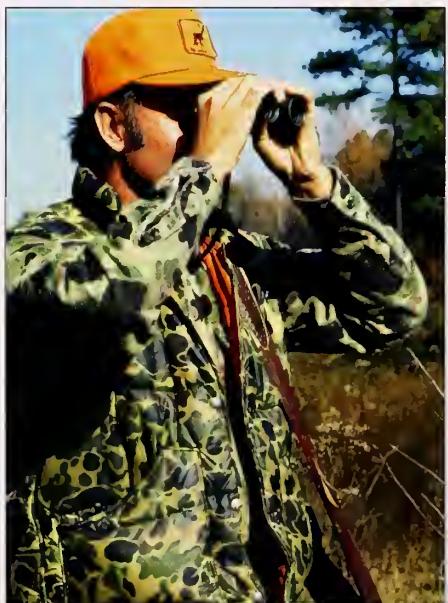
but it's worth it. Set the alarm clock a half hour earlier if necessary so you can circle around and avoid spooking the quarry on the way in.

Another trick that helps is to clear a trail in to the stand. You can do this simply by removing noisy branches and brush piles in the way or get more elaborate and use a leaf blower or rake, even weed trimmers and lawnmowers to make a trail that allows a totally silent entrance.

6. Not using calls.

Some of the biggest bucks hunters take each year are shot when they are coming into calls or pausing when they hear them, giving the hunter a better shot. One of the largest bucks I've ever taken, a 5-year-old 10 point with a 6-inch drop tine, came to within 25 yards in response to a grunt call just before sunset a few years ago. Many other bucks over the years have

©Dwight Dyke



©Gerald Amy



©Gerald Amy

come rushing in, sneaking in, or at the bare minimum, at least paused in their progress and looked toward the sound they heard.

Try rattling antlers or devices that create the sound of two fighting bucks and also learn to use a grunt call. If you don't, lots of bucks may walk right past without giving you a shot, or in some cases, without you even seeing them. A short series of

Top: When reaching in your bag of tricks don't forget grunt calls or rattling antlers which are great attention getters. One of the biggest mistakes that you can make is shooting the first little buck that comes along. The next buck that comes your way may be that one of a lifetime.

"contact" grunts is the most commonly used and important call to know. Add a doe bleat call, too, and blow it occasionally during the rut.

7. Shooting the first legal buck that walks into range.

For the young or first time hunter, this may not be a mistake. But in most areas of Virginia, enough bucks are available that there's no need to rush to pull the trigger the minute you see a legal deer. A buck at 18 months has reached only 10 percent of its antler potential. If an animal looks young, with a narrow face, waist that tapers upwards and thin, wispy antlers, you may want to consider not pulling the trigger. Let bucks get at least in the two or three year age class, and you'll be happier with your decision and help the hunting for all other Virginia sportsmen as well.

And from a practical standpoint, if you want to harvest a quality animal, you're seldom going to do so by shooting the first buck you see. If you're busy field dressing that deer or are already back at camp or at home, you won't be in the woods when a larger buck might have appeared.

The largest bucks are almost always the last to walk down a trail and the last to emerge out in a field or food

plot. If you shoot the first legal animal you see, you'll never know these bigger bucks were there.

8. Not investing in quality optics.

The quality of binoculars and riflescopes has improved dramatically over the years, but you still can't get a good product dirt-cheap. On the other hand, you don't have to own high-end Austrian or German optics to tag a nice whitetail. If you can afford them, they're certainly worth the money, but a middle price level binocular will serve you well. A bargain basement pair will not.

More than once in my early hunting years I missed the chance to take a quality buck because the riflescope or binoculars just weren't up to the challenge in certain low-light hunting situations. You want two things primarily—clarity and strong light-gathering ability. The binoculars should fit

well and feel good in your hands, and you need a riflescope that suits your particular hunting style.

My choice is 10X binoculars, but many hunters prefer 8X. For a riflescope, go with a 2-7X, 3-9X or similar variable. These are every bit as accurate as fixed scopes and much more versatile. Set it on a low power when still-hunting and crank it up when longer shots present themselves.

9. Not paying enough attention on stand.

You've heard the advice before—take a good book to pass the hours on stand. Well, pardon me if I seem too serious about my sport, but to me if you're sitting on a stand or in a blind reading a book, you're not hunting. Hunting is immersing oneself in the world of our quarry. It means becoming a part of the natural world by taking up the role of the predator. You

can't do that if your face is buried in a science fiction or detective novel.

Focus on the habitat around you and study it for signs that your quarry may be approaching. A chattering squirrel, a snapping twig, movement, a horizontal form in the mostly vertical shapes of the woods, sunlight gleaming off an antler tine—all of these and other signs can alert you to the presence of your quarry. But you have to be paying attention.

Watch in the direction in front of you where you expect animals are most likely to come from, but also turn your head slowly to each side occasionally scanning as far as your peripheral vision will allow. Every so often, slowly twist your body enough to check out the area behind you. Never move with quick, jerky motions that could spook a nearby animal that you haven't seen. Move quietly and fluidly with just a slow rotation of your head.



©Dwight Dyke

10.

Not controlling buck fever.

Even seasoned hunters can have difficulty with this when a buck with an impressive rack steps into view. Don't panic and try to jerk the gun or

©Dwight Dyke



bow up and get a quick shot off. On the other hand, don't freeze up and let it saunter out of view.

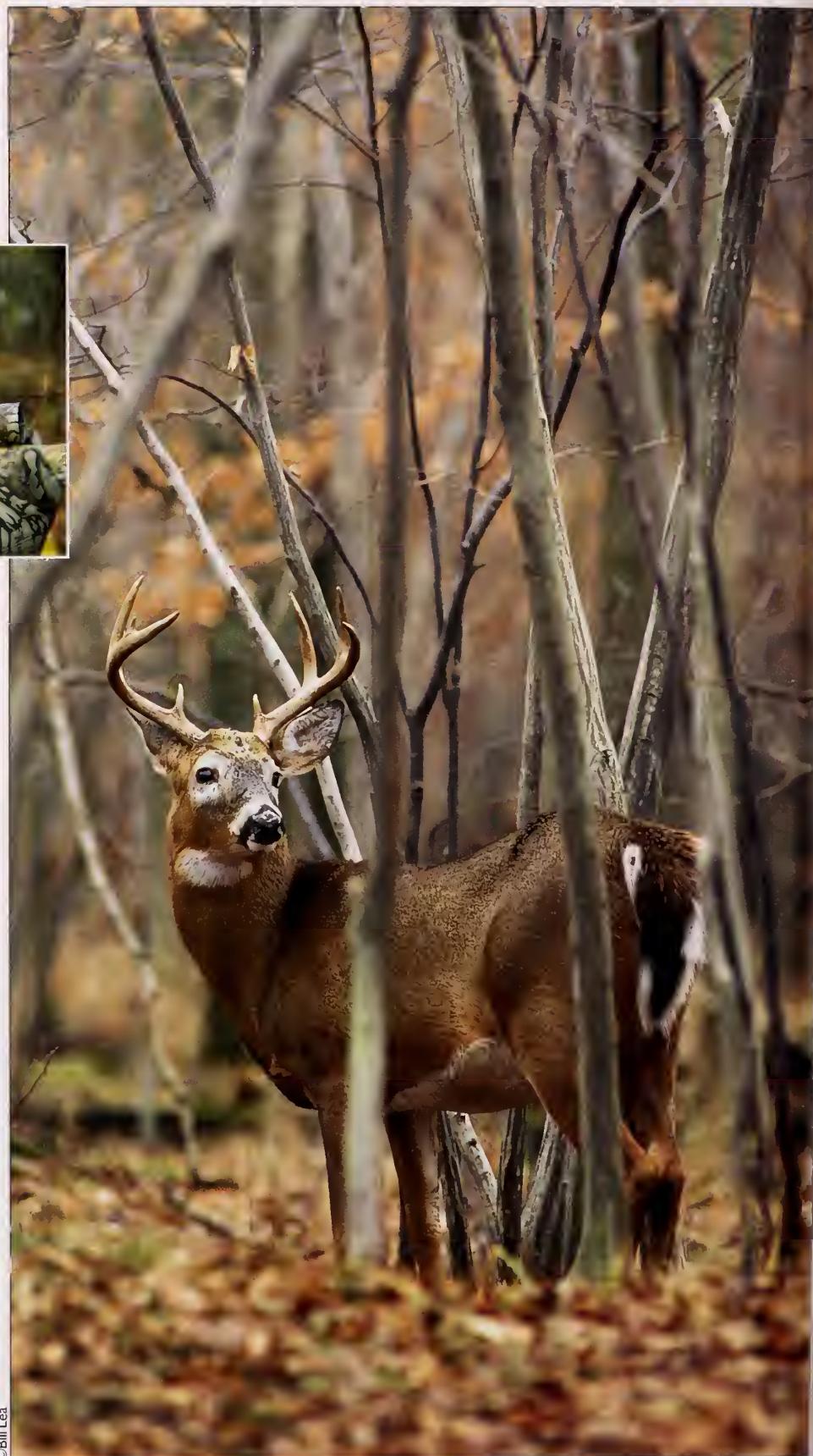
Strong mental control is required to handle the situation. Stay calm and control your breathing. Forget about the rack. Once you've decided it's a deer you want, don't dwell on counting points. Slowly raise your gun or bow when the animal is looking away or behind a tree, aim carefully, wait for just the perfect angle and release the arrow or squeeze the trigger.

Concentrate on taking those steps one at a time and you'll be so preoccupied with the challenge that you won't have a chance to get overwhelmed with buck fever. Not that you won't breathe a bit heavier and get excited. (I'd give up deer hunting if that didn't happen.) But to avoid this final mistake, mind control and calmness must prevail over adrenaline.

Good luck. And remember, keeping errors to a minimum is the surest route to deer hunting success this fall. □

For over 20 years Gerald Almy has been sharing his outdoor knowledge about hunting and fishing in the pages of Virginia Wildlife and other nationally acclaimed magazines.

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VIRGINIA WILDLIFE OUTDOOR CATALOG



Photos by Dwight Dyke



Fleece Knee Blankets

These rollup blankets are 100% polyester and measure 50"x 60." Each has our *Virginia Wildlife* logo. Great to curl up with in the old rocking chair or keep one in the car. Available in Red, Grey and Black.

Item #VW-132 \$19.95 each

2005 Limited Edition Virginia Wildlife Collector's Knife

This year's knife has been customized for us by Buck Knives and has a cut out blade of a hunter and his dog. Each knife is individually serial numbered and comes with a distinctive rosewood handle and gold lettering. This custom knife comes in a decorative solid cherry box with a hunting scene engraved on the cover.

Item #VW-405

\$75.00 each



Sheath Knife

This attractive and functional knife has walnut handles with a 3½-inch blade and is approximately 8 inches overall. Made for us by Bear Cutlery, each knife is engraved with *Virginia Wildlife* on the blade and comes with a leather sheath.

Item #VW-404

\$29.95



2004 Limited Edition Virginia Wildlife Collector's Knife

This knife has been custom made for us by Buck Knives. Every facet of this knife indicates that it will be a treasured collectable. From its distinctive handle with gold lettering and brass bolsters to the knife blade engraved with the Department's logo, each knife is individually serial numbered and comes in a decorative, custom wood box with a waterfowl scene engraved on the cover. Limited quantities still available.

Item #VW-403

\$85.00 each



New Collectable Five Piece Coaster Set

Made of solid cherry, this attractive set of 4 wooden coasters is packaged in a wooden box. The box and each coaster have been custom engraved with a deer image.

Item #VW-521

\$20.95

VW-503

Buckles

Our bass and duck belt buckle collection is crafted of solid pewter with *Virginia Wildlife* engraved at the bottom. Each buckle comes in a custom gift box with the VDGIF distinctive logo displayed.

Item #VW-502 Bass VW-503 Duck \$9.95 each



VW-502



VW-500

VW-501

□ Limited Edition Collector's Plate

The first in a series of *Virginia Wildlife* limited edition collector's plates. This collectable is titled "Winter Comfort" and is taken from an original artwork by Bob Henley. Each plate is individually serial numbered and has the year of issue on the back.

Item #VW-500 \$ 22.95

□ Limited Edition Steins

The first in a series of *Virginia Wildlife* limited edition steins. This companion piece to our collector's plate shown above is also individually serial numbered and has the year of issue on the back.

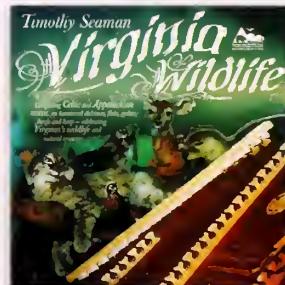
Item #VW-501 \$16.95



□ Bear With Fish

Our bear has caught his fish and is not about to let it get away. This collectable bear is approximately 12 inches high.

Item #VW-518 \$9.95 each



Duck With Duckling □

This colorful collectable duck and duckling is available in limited quantities.

Item #VW-519 \$9.95 each.



VW-519

VW-518

Virginia Wildlife Collection of Throws



VW-509



VW-511



VW-507



VW-513



VW-514



VW-520



VW-515



VW-516

Each throw is approximately 52" X 69" and is triple jacquard woven of 100% cotton.

\$39.95 each

Please specify:

Winter Songbirds	Item #VW-507
Down From The North	Item #VW-509
Fall Buck Throw	Item #VW-511
Bend in the Road	Item #VW-513
River Ducks	Item #VW-514
Gallant Tribe	Item #VW-515
The Perch	Item #VW-516
Waiting at Crow Creek	Item #VW-520



Book Clock

This decorative book-style clock is crafted of solid cherry wood, beautifully engraved with a vivid wildlife scene on the book side of the clock. The clock face is of Old World décor, a collector's delight. Clock is 5 1/2" X 8 1/2" when opened.

Item #VW-303

\$29.95 each



Mouse Pad / Coffee Cup Set

It will be hard not to stare at this lifelike picture of a fawn as you sit at your computer and drink your favorite beverage.

Item #VW-223

\$14.95

Our Virginia Wildlife collection of
Pulsar Watches by Seiko

Your choice \$59.00 each or 2 for \$100.00



From the Ladies Pulsar collection. This attractive watch has a gold tone bracelet with gold tone hands and markers on a champagne dial. Water resistant.

Item #VW-302



From the Pulsar Nightfall Line. TiCN plating, gold tone crown, hands and markers and black dial. Water resistant.

Item #VW-301



Man's Wrist Watch
Stainless steel bracelet, luminous hands and markers, and blue sunburst dial. One way rotating elasped timing bezel. Water resistant.

Item #VW-300



VW-134

VW-133

Introducing Our New
Virginia Wildlife Knit Caps

Each cap is made of 100% acrylic. \$11.95 each

Item #VW-133 Orange with Deer

Item #VW-134 Light Grey with Eagle



NEW *Virginia Wildlife* Hooded Sweat Shirts

These attractive shirts are a 50/50 cotton polyester blend with an embroidered logo and a full zipper front. Sizes : Med., Large, X-Large and XX-Large.

\$21.95 each

Item #VW-127 Black w/Eagle

Item #VW-128 Navy w/Duck

Item #VW-129 Grey w/Deer



Fleece Vests

New to our product line for 2005 these attractive vests are 100% polyester and carry the *Virginia Wildlife* logo. Available in Red, Black, and Grey. Sizes: Med., Large, X-Large and XX-Large.

Item #VW-131

\$24.95

NEW Outdoor
Zipper-Front Vest

For the outdoorsperson it comes with a mesh lining and has 5 pockets. Natural color with a Trout embroidered above the pocket. Available in Sizes: Med., Large, X-Large and XX-Large.

Item #VW-130 \$45.95





VW-113

VW-116

VW-118

VW-114

VW-112

VW-120



Virginia Wildlife Caps

Our caps feature three unique designs. Each cap is 100% cotton, size adjustable and embroidered with the *Virginia Wildlife* logo.

\$11.95 each

High profile - deer - Item #VW-118

High profile - Camo with Black Letters - Item #VW-113

Low profile - deer - Item #VW-117

High profile - Blaze Orange - Item #VW-114

High profile - bass - Item #VW-116

High profile - Camo with Tan Letters - Item #VW-112

Low profile - bass - Item #VW-115

High profile - Virginia Wildlife - Item #VW-120



VW-121



VW-122

Virginia Wildlife Caps

Our *Virginia Wildlife* hats are available in 100% cotton or in denim and are size adjustable. These attractive hats have been embroidered with our *Virginia Wildlife* logo and feature either an eagle or trout for the wildlife and fishing enthusiasts. Hats are available in high profile. Check out our new low profile denim hats. These hats look great with our new denim shirts. \$11.95 each.

High profile -

Navy with Trout - Item #VW-121

Low profile - Denim with Eagle - Item #VW-123

Black with Eagle - Item #VW-122

High profile - Denim with Trout - Item #VW-124



VW-123



VW-124



VW-126

NEW *Virginia Wildlife* Caps for 2005

Our new caps are made of blue denim with a black suede bill and feature either an eagle or a duck.

\$11.95 each

Item #VW-125 Eagle

Item #VW-126 Duck

Please Allow 3 to 4 Weeks for Delivery

Item #	Name of Item	Qty.	Size	Color	Price	Total Price

Make checks payable to *Treasure of Virginia* and mail to:

Virginia Wildlife Catalog, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104

For credit card orders call (804) 367-2569

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Account Number

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Signature

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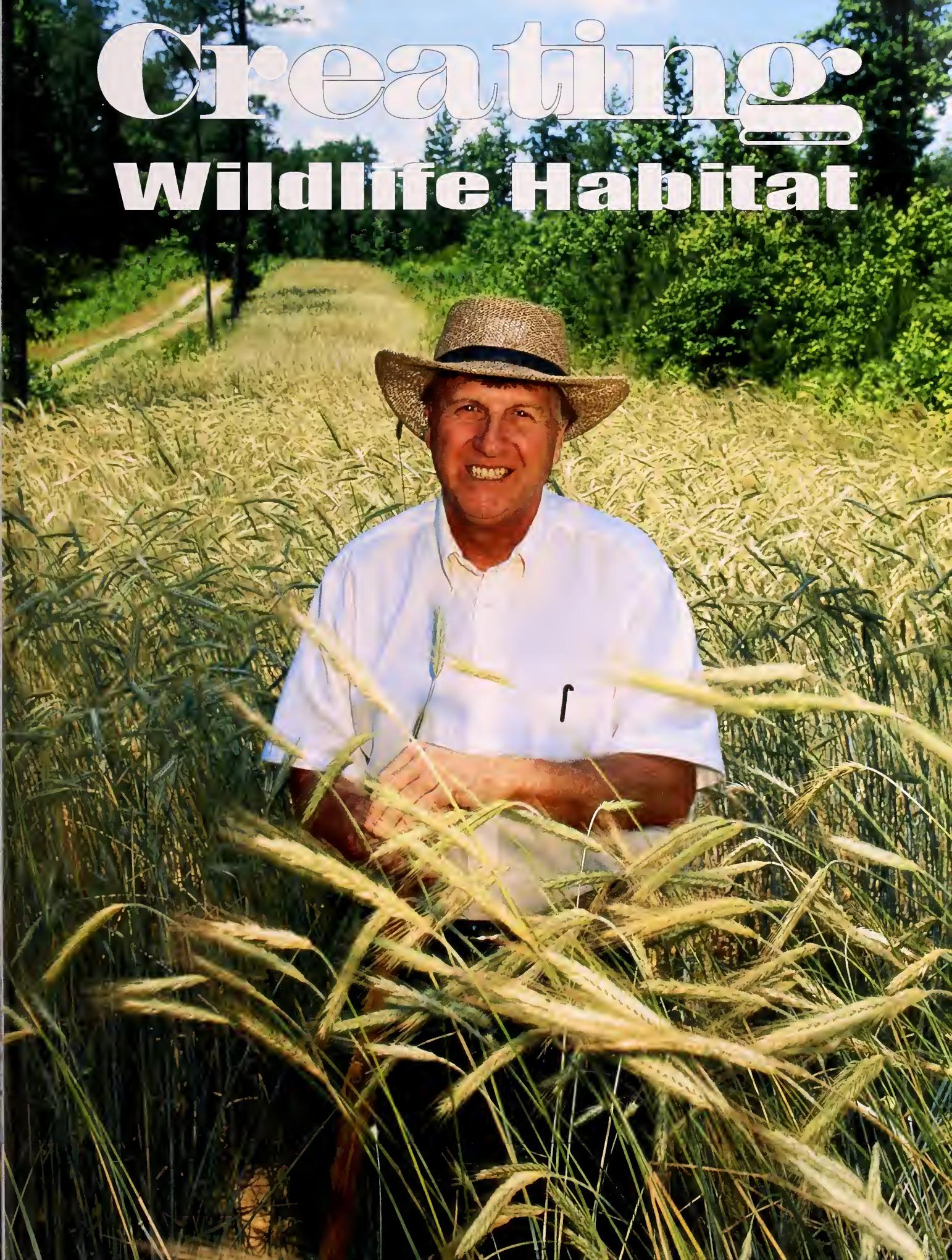
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City

State

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Creating Wildlife Habitat





©Dwight Dyke

Finding new alternatives to benefit wildlife has one local conservationist spreading his message down the right pipeline.

by Tee Clarkson

At some point during his 56 years, Chris Hargrave has climbed over nearly every downed log, waded through almost every swamp, and tangled himself in just about every honeysuckle thicket there is in Prince George County in search of turkeys or deer. By his definition, however, "A true outdoorsman should not be measured by the game he harvests, but by what he returns to our great outdoors." Chris has certainly returned his fair share. Chris built his first wildlife food plot when he was in the 8th grade after a local game warden for the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries spoke to his class at Prince George High School, encouraging them to build food plots and even providing the seed for those interested. Chris didn't stop there. Over the years his talents in the outdoors have continued to benefit wildlife in Prince George County and throughout the state.

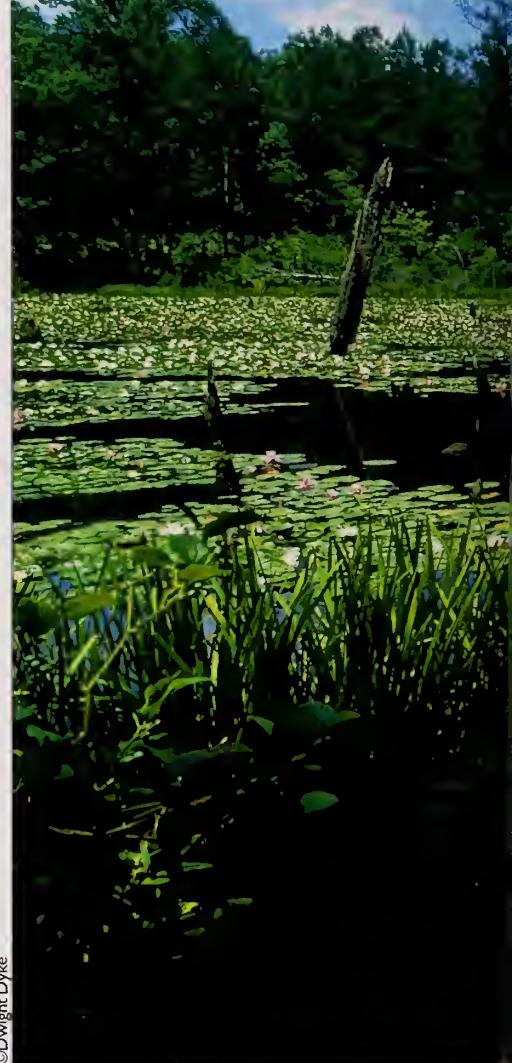
While Chris has been involved with creating wildlife habitat that has won the Governor's Environmental Excellence Award, as well as initiating Operation Brush Pile that created



©Dwight Dyke

almost 10,000 brush piles for wildlife throughout the state, it was on a cool, rainy evening on April 29th, 2003, that Chris secured the go-ahead to begin the largest project of his life.

At the time, Enerdyne, a power systems company, was working on a 22-mile gas line to pump methane from the Sussex County Landfill to the Honeywell Industrial Plant in Hopewell. The company had the beginning and end of the line in place but was having trouble securing 10 miles of the Virginia Department of Transportation rite-of-way along the road in the middle section of the pipeline due to landowner opposition. Fortunately they found Chris, who, through his in-depth knowledge of the area and his good relationship with local timber companies was able to "take the project off the highway and put it into the woods," doing less damage to surrounding areas and having the least impact on the general public. Chris put Enerdyne in



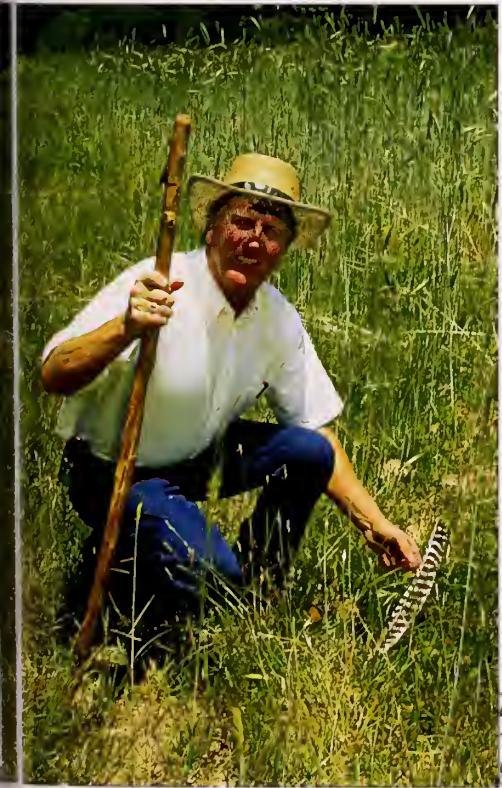
©Dwight Dyke

Previous page: Chris Hargrave is on a mission to find unique ways of creating wildlife habitat. For years he has been advocating the benefits of creating brush piles for wildlife habitat. Now his "pipe" dream is focused on turning 10 miles of pipeline into a wildlife oasis.

Right: This turkey feather is one of the many wildlife signs now seen along the Blackwater Wildlife Line.

touch with the RMK Timberland Group of Regions Bank, the Investment Manager for the timberland owner, Balanced Timberland Fund B. By tunneling under the shortest sections of wetlands, and in the most direct path, Enerdyne was finally able to connect the two ends of the pipeline.

The deal between RMK Timberland Group and Enerdyne, included planting the gas lines in food plots for wildlife, clearing fire lanes, and providing gates and stone for the roads along the pipeline. The timberland owner, hunters and wildlife enthusi-

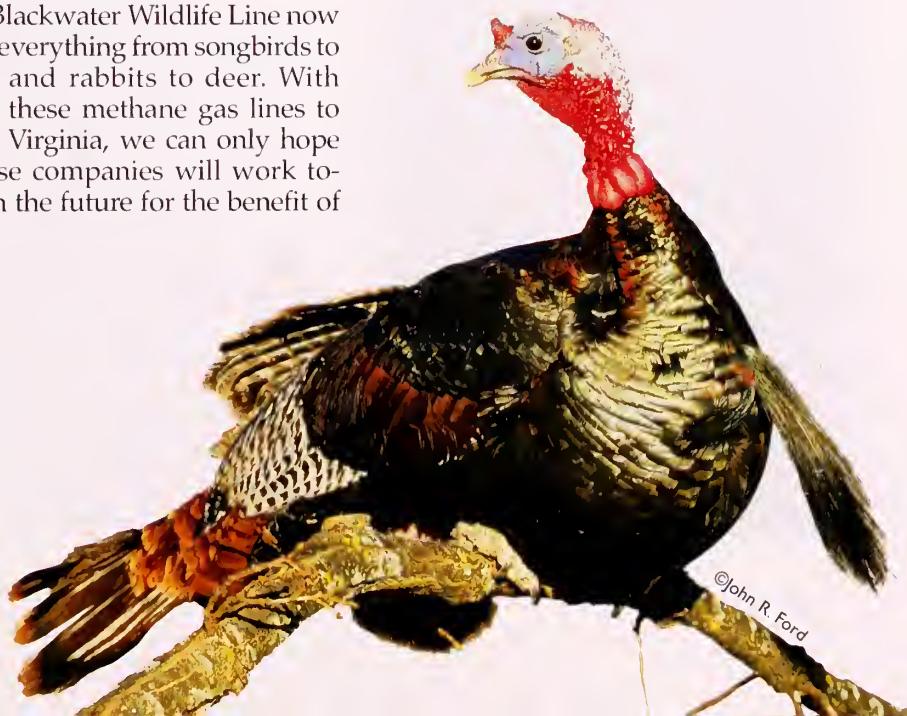


asts all benefited. In December of 2004, after consulting wildlife biologists at the Department, Chris planted almost 10 miles of pipeline in a wildlife blend from Southern States, consisting of rye, oats, winter peas, purple-top turnip, yellow clover, red clover and rafica kale.

The Blackwater Wildlife Line now benefits everything from songbirds to turkeys and rabbits to deer. With more of these methane gas lines to come in Virginia, we can only hope that these companies will work together in the future for the benefit of

everyone involved, most importantly the wildlife. □

Tee Clarkson spent six years as a fly fishing guide on the Green River in Utah before becoming a high school English teacher. He currently teaches at Deep Run High School in Henrico County.





So, What's For Dinner?



Part II:

Improve your hunting skills this fall by learning more about the culinary cravings of the wild turkey.

by Bruce Ingram

As much as I delight in the opportunity to bowhunt for Virginia's whitetails, I always cease bowhunting for a few days at the beginning of the state's early fall turkey season in late October and early November. To my way of thinking, the wild turkey is the most fascinating game or nongame

animal in the state, and I can't bear the thought of not chasing after these birds when the season commences.

Last month in *Virginia Wildlife* we published "Part I: What Virginia's Deer Are Eating Come October." This month, we'll examine the major and minor menu items of the Commonwealth's wild turkeys in November. Dave Steffen, research biologist supervisor for the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF), maintains that the two big game species share at least one similarity in their food preferences.

Turkeys consume a wide variety of hard and soft mast foods as well as insects and vegetation. Knowing where to locate their favorite foods can often be a big advantage to having a successful hunting season.

"Like deer, you can't talk about turkey feeding habits without taking into account the impact that acorns have on movement," says Steffen. "And for turkeys that impact is considerable. During years of poor hard mast crops, the turkey harvest usually rises as the birds are in fields and other open areas more and thus are more vulnerable. When the acorn crop has been heavy, the turkeys are more scattered, harder to find, and the kill typically drops."

Steffen says that also like whitetails, Virginia's turkeys often gravitate toward areas where white oak trees have produced bumper crops. But not for the same reason that deer do.

"In contrast to deer and other mammals, turkeys do not prefer acorns of the white oak group over those of the red oak group," says Steffen. "Compared to mammals, turkeys have a poor sense of taste and probably can't distinguish between a sweet white oak acorn and a bitter red oak acorn. Studies have shown that nut size determines preference; smaller acorns (like post oak and blackjack oak) are preferred while larger acorns (like swamp white oak) are utilized less. Basically, northern red oak and



©Ralph Hensley

white oak acorns are all equally and highly preferred. Because they fall earlier, I suppose it might look like white oak acorns could be preferred; however, they're just among the first available.

If turkeys had a diet completely composed of acorns, which rarely happens because of the diversity of foods they can eat, an adult gobbler would need to eat about 80 acorns a day and a hen would need about 35 acorns a day. Because a full turkey crop can hold over 100 acorns, a full crop from a single feeding can satisfy their daily food needs. Obviously, bumper acorn production minimizes feeding time, movements, and exposure to predators—including hunters."

A problem with white oaks is that many years this hardwood either fails to produce at all or production is scant. For example, this past fall, every time I visited one particular Botetourt County white oak stand during pre-season scouting forays, I either found a flock foraging on acorns or extremely fresh scratching. But on a mid October bowhunting trip there, I noted that the white oak

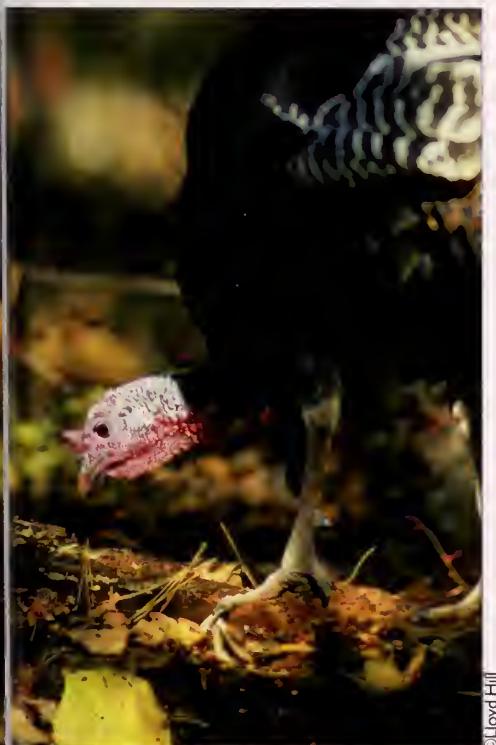
Above: Beechnuts, white-oak acorns and dogwood berries are fall favorites for wild turkeys. Below: After locating an area where turkeys were foraging on red oak acorns the author knew he had found just the right spot to harvest his Thanksgiving bird.



©Bruce Ingman



©Bruce Ingman



©Lloyd Hill



©John R. Ford



©Dwight Dyke

acorns had all been consumed. That evening, not surprisingly, I observed neither turkeys nor whitetails.

Like deer, the Old Dominion's turkey contingent relishes the nuts of the various red oak species, such as northern red, scarlet, black, pin, blackjack and turkey. For instance, several years ago in early November while afield in Franklin County, I heard a flock on the roost. For most of the morning, I kept trying to catch up to the gang as it moved up and down the various hollows on the mountain-side. From my meanderings, I realized that the turkeys, deer, squirrels, bluejays and the host of other creatures that devour white oak acorns had made short work of these nuts. And I deduced from all the acorns underfoot that the northern red, scarlet and black oaks had spread forth a cornucopia of their bounty and were still very available.

I then decided to set up in one of the hardwood hollows where the red oak acorns were particularly abundant and where fresh scratching and droppings existed. Sure enough, about 90 minutes later the flock ap-



©Ralph Hensley
Blackberries and raspberries provide quality food for turkeys and other animals during the summer months. This is also a good time to do some scouting for turkey signs.

peared, I charged into their midst and was fortunately able to conduct a good scatter. I waited the standard 15 or 20 minutes or so to begin calling and then began to issue a series of kee-kees every five minutes. Soon birds began to respond with two jennies in particular being especially frantic with their utterances. When

the duo appeared several minutes later, I trained my 12 gauge on the lead bird and was soon heading down the mountain with the makings of Thanksgiving dinner. Later I examined the crop of the bird and not surprisingly red oak acorns dominated the contents.

The Old Dominion's deer and turkeys relish many of the same soft mast foods as well, but here their preferences diverge considerably.

"Grapes are a huge turkey food in November and are much more important to the birds than they are for deer," says Steffen. "The same can be said for dogwood berries. In the mountains of western Virginia, wild cherries are an important food source for turkeys. Basically, turkeys will consume just about any soft mast berry."

In fact next to acorns, I would rate grapes as the next most important food source for turkeys and when the hard mast crop has been consumed or hasn't produced, I always seek out

©Ralph Hensley



©Bill Lea



Turkeys will aggressively forage during the summer and early fall months on wild grapes as they ripen and fall to the ground. Looking for fresh turkey droppings is a good indicator of whether a flock of birds has been feeding in the area.

the grape coves that are so common, especially in the state's Mountain and Piedmont regions. The variety that is probably the most prevalent across the Commonwealth is the summer grape, which ripens in late September and early October and which drops its berries throughout the fall and into early winter.

One December in an attempt to locate a flock, I had started out at the foot of a Botetourt County mountain at sunrise and by mid morning had ascended to nearly the mountain's

summit without having encountered birds. When I rounded a bend on an old logging road that winds up the mountain, I could hear a flock scratching just out of sight above me on the mountainside. I quickly set up against a pitch pine, issued forth a few soft yelps, and shouldered my Remington 1100. One bird peered over the side of the mountain and my hunt was over. When I went to retrieve the jenny, I noted that the flock had "raked" the ground under a summer grape copse.

Besides grapes, dogwood and cherry berries, turkeys will forage on the fruits of sumacs, haws, hollies, hawthorns, elderberries, black gums, viburnums, poison oak, spicebush and goodness knows what others. Of course, regardless of whether the hard or soft mast menu items produce, turkeys also know how to glean a field for food.

Dave Steffen relates that turkeys forage on a wide variety of insect life in fields. Hundreds of different kinds of beetle species exist in our state, and I would wager at one time or another that Virginia's turkeys have gulped down just about every one of those species. For example, one December in Roanoke County, I watched fascinated as two mature gobblers flipped over a slab of old bark on the ground and began scarfing down the beasties beneath. Eventually the duo wandered off and afterwards I walked over to the bark slab and noted the cold, benumbed beetles that had been aroused from their hiding place.

Grasshoppers and crickets are especial "field favorites" of turkeys, and the birds are renown for picking off hoppers from the stems of weeds, especially early in the morning when these creatures are still sluggish from the cool autumn nights. Praying mantis, walking sticks, spiders and ants are other creatures that don't often escape the ever-wandering eyes of turkeys. I have even observed birds chasing and capturing moths in fields.

And the various seed producers that thrive in open areas also can attract flocks. For example, in early November last autumn I was hunting in Bedford County when two friends



and I were able to scatter a large flock that was foraging in an overgrown field. Later, we were able to call in several members and I killed a bird. After I had checked in and cleaned the jenny, I decided to examine the crop contents. The bird had managed to deposit into her crop over a cup of various weed seeds.

Sometimes, turkeys consume the plants that produce those various seeds. For example, in mid December two years ago, I called in and killed a gobbler that had a dozen or so slivers of orchard grass—and nothing more—within his crop.

The various creatures that dwell along the state's streams are also targets of opportunity. Turkeys will prowl the transition zone between creek and woods or field and gulp snails, earthworms and perhaps even a hapless minnow. A good friend told me that he has seen turkeys visit springs and capture crayfish.

Certainly one of the most common foods of turkeys is the homely grub. I especially find turkeys feeding on these grayish wormlike creatures, which are the larval form of insects, when the hard and/or soft mast crops have been consumed or later in the season when food has become scarce.

For instance, one December when I was off work for the Christmas holidays, I had checked out a series of hardwood hollows, fields and creek bottoms without locating a gang. I was walking through a Virginia pine thicket when I busted a flock. Later, I was able to ascertain that the birds had been overturning the soft needles beneath the pines in order to reach the hibernating grubs beneath. Pine thickets are a particularly good place to search for turkeys when a few inches of snow blankets the forest. Then grubs can become an especially critical food source.

Learning the autumn foods of Virginia's turkeys is a fascinating experience and sometimes makes me wish I had majored in biology—the outdoor world is indeed an ongoing classroom that we never graduate from. And as a nice little sidelight, becoming versed in these menu items just might make you a more successful turkey hunter. □

©Bruce Ingram



If turkey hunters want to identify some of the insects that turkeys forage upon, consider *A Field Guide to the Insects* by Donald Borror and Richard White. The book is part of the Peterson Field Guide Series. An outstanding book about turkeys is *The Wild Turkey: Biology and Management*, compiled and edited by James Dickson and published by Stackpole.

Bruce Ingram is the author of the following books: *The James River Guide* (\$15.00), *The New River Guide* (\$15.00), and *The Shenandoah/Rappahannock Rivers Guide* (\$18.25). To obtain a copy, send a check to Ingram at P.O. Box 429, Fincastle, VA 24090



2005 Outdoor Calendar of Events

December 1: Deadline for *Virginia Wildlife* Photo Contest.

December 3: Generation Deer Hunting Workshop for Youth at Occoquan Bay Wildlife Refuge. Contact Lt. Dodson at 540-899-4169.

December 5: Deer Hunting Workshop for Novice Hunters at Occoquan Bay Wildlife Refuge. Contact Lt. Dodson at 540-899-4169. □



Record Roanoke Bass Caught

by Dean Fowler

The State Record Fish Committee, of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, has certified a new State Record Roanoke Bass. Mr. Harry G. Swauger III, of Yorktown, Virginia, caught his 2-pound 9-ounce record fish on a Rat-L-Trap in Western Branch Reservoir on May 28th. His catch breaks the previous record of 2 pounds, 6 ounces set by Bobby Barnette in 1988, one of Virginia's longest standing records. The location of Mr. Swauger's catch

makes it very unique indeed. The Roanoke bass, a close relative to the rock bass, is generally a stream fish found only in the Roanoke River and Chowan River drainages. How did it get into Western Branch Reservoir? Most likely, as a youngster it was pumped from the Nottoway River

into one of Norfolk's water supply reservoirs upstream. It apparently worked its way downstream and found Western Branch to its liking! For a complete list of the current State Record Freshwater Fish, visit the Department's Web site at [www.dgf.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov). □



In The Heat Of Battle

Thanks go out to Durwin Carter from Centreville, a long time subscriber to *Virginia Wildlife* and an active outdoorsmen, for sharing this unusual photograph of two battling hawks. Jeff Cooper, a wildlife diversity biologist for the Department, identified the hawk with its back to the ground as a red-shouldered and the darker colored as a red-tailed. Jeff also noted that during their migration it is not uncommon to find these two species of hawks engaged in territorial disputes, but what makes this photograph so unique is finding them fighting on the ground and not in the air. Like most birds of prey, hawks will avoid standing around on the ground where they can then be preyed upon by other predators. □



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Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

Publication Title: Virginia Wildlife

Publication Number: 0042-6792

Filing Date: 09-16-05

Issue Frequency: Monthly

Number of Issues Published Annually: 12

Annual Subscription Price: \$12.95

Complete Mailing Address: 4010 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23230

Contact Person: Lee Walker, Editor, Telephone 804-367-0486

Full Names of Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Contributing Editors: Lee Walker, Mel White, Ron Messina, and Julia Smith; Virginia Wildlife, 4010 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23230.

Owner: Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, 4010 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23230

Known Bondholders, Mortgagors, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities: None

Tax Status: Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months

Publication Title: Virginia Wildlite

Issue Data for Circulation Data Below: September 2005

Extent and Nature of Circulation	Avg No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies Of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
Total Number of Copies	48,500	48,000
Paid/Requested Outside-County Mailing Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541	40,886	38,451
Paid In-Country Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541	None	None
Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution	None	None
Other Classes Mailed Through USPS	None	None
Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation	40,886	38,451
Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation Outside-Country as Stated on Form 3541	1,947	1,944
Free Distribution by Mail Outside-County As Stated on Form 3541	2,000	2,000
Total Free Distribution	3,947	3,944
Total Distribution	44,833	42,395
Copies Not Distributed	3,667	5,605
Total	48,500	48,000
Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation	91%	91%

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Thank you for supporting wildlife management in Virginia through hunting.

RECIPES

by Joan Cone

Don't Waste That Deer Heart or Liver

When properly cooked, deer heart and liver are delicious. Hearts from all animals, wild or domestic, taste alike. Oven roasting will ruin these hearts, but braising makes them tender.

Big game liver also can be made into tasty dishes. Both hearts and livers are exceptional sources of essential food nutrients. A 3 1/2-ounce serving of either heart or liver provides over half your daily requirement of protein, iron and riboflavin.

Menu

Deer Heart In Crockpot

- Venison Liver Loaf
- Vegetable Casserole
- Cranberry Fruit Mold
- Butternut Apple Crisp

Deer Heart in Crockpot

- 2 deer hearts or 1 moose or elk heart
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 1 cup thinly sliced carrots
- 1 can (1 pound) tomatoes, undrained and cut up
- 1 cup water
- 1/2 cup brown rice, uncooked
- Salt and pepper to taste

Wash hearts and remove hard parts, if necessary. Slice hearts across grain and place in crockpot. Add remaining ingredients to crockpot. Cover and cook on LOW heat for 8 to 9 hours. Serves 4 to 5.

Venison Liver Loaf

- 1 pound deer or other big game liver, sliced
- 1 tablespoon cooking oil
- 1/4 cup chopped onion
- 1/4 cup pork sausage
- 1 egg, slightly beaten
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 cup soft bread crumbs
- Salt to taste

Cook liver in oil until lightly browned on each side, about 5 minutes. Grind liver or put it in a processor. Combine ground liver with rest of ingredients. Place in a greased 9 x 5-inch loaf pan and bake in a preheated 300° F. oven for 1 hour. Serves 4 to 5.

Vegetable Casserole

- 1 bag (16 ounces) frozen vegetable combination (broccoli, carrots, cauliflower), thawed & drained
- 1 can (10 3/4 ounces) Healthy Request Cream of Mushroom Soup
- 1 cup shredded Swiss cheese

1/3 cup sour cream, regular or light

Ground black pepper to taste

1 can (2.8 ounces) French fried onions

In a large bowl, combine vegetables, soup, 1/2 cup cheese, sour cream, pepper and 1/2 can French fried onions. Pour into a shallow 1-quart casserole. Bake, covered, in a preheated 350° F. oven for 30 minutes or until vegetables are done. Sprinkle remaining cheese and onions in diagonal rows across top and bake, uncovered, 5 minutes or until onions are golden brown. Serves 4 to 6.

Cranberry Fruit Mold

- 2 cups boiling water
- 1 package (8-serving size) cranberry or any red flavor gelatin dessert
- 1 1/2 cups cold ginger ale or water
- 2 cups halved green or red seedless grapes
- 1 can (11 ounces) mandarin orange segments, drained

Stir boiling water into gelatin in large bowl at least 2 minutes until completely dissolved. Stir in cold ginger ale and refrigerate about 1 1/2 hours or until thickened. Stir in fruit. Spoon into a 5-cup mold or an oblong casserole. Refrigerate until firm. Unmold or cut into serving size portions. Makes 10 (1/2-cup) servings.

Butternut Apple Crisp

- 1 small butternut squash, about 1 pound
- 3 medium Granny Smith apples, peeled and sliced
- 1/4 cup corn syrup
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 3/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Salt to taste

Oat Topping:

- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 cup quick-cooking oats
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 4 tablespoons cold butter

Peel squash and cut in half lengthwise; discard seeds. Cut squash into thin slices. In a large bowl, toss the squash, apples, corn syrup and lemon juice. Combine the brown sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon and salt and stir into squash mixture. Place mixture into a greased 13 x 9-inch baking dish. Cover and bake in a preheated 375° F. oven for 20 minutes. In a small bowl, combine flour, oats and brown sugar. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Sprinkle over squash mixture. Bake 25 minutes longer or until squash and apples are tender and topping is lightly browned. Serve warm with ice cream, if desired. Makes 6 to 8 servings. □

On The Water

by Jim Crosby



©Dwight Dyke

Some winter days at our latitude can be very inviting with warm sunshine and light winds.

How many times have you wandered out to enjoy the warm, winter sunshine, dressed too lightly, and found that when the sun slipped behind a cloud or dropped over the horizon, it left you shivering uncontrollably?

That uncontrollable shivering and chattering teeth is the first sign of hypothermia—a life-threatening malady that left unchecked can lead to death.

Boating is not fun when you are so cold you can't enjoy it. I have even been hypothermic in the middle of the summer when drenched by a thunderstorm in heavy winds. The wind blowing across your wet body can chill you down in a hurry.

Your best protection is to take more clothing than you think you will need. I have done that and worn a life jacket on top of everything I had and still shivered from the cold.

Oh! Life jacket. That brings up another of the winter boating problems—water temperature. A sudden immersion in cold water can lower the body temperature so quickly that

you lose your reasoning ability. Add heavy, wet clothes to that load and you could find it impossible to stay afloat without a buoyant life jacket.

Boaters have available to them a life jacket that is also an insulated coat commonly referred to as a "Float Coat." They are unbelievably warm and a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket—all in one. And for even colder weather, we have available an insulated coverall that is also a Coast Guard approved life jacket. They are so warm it really has to be a cold day to wear one all closed up. As a matter of fact, I have had to unzip mine to let some heat out when doing a little work on deck in winter.

A problem with hypothermia is that a victim may become so disoriented that he's unaware of his dangerous condition.

We all know that the body's core temperature is 98.6. Between that and 95 degrees, you will have a sensation of being cold and start shivering. At about 93 degrees, the muscles become rigid and mental disorientation intensifies. In a way, shivering is a healthy symptom; when it stops, the victim is rapidly on the way to severe hypothermia.

The victim can become unconscious at about 87 degrees, and the heart may stop at about 85 degrees.

Almost all cases of hypothermia can be treated successfully, however the best solution is prevention.

Having the foresight to prepare for the worst by having the necessary personal protection gear is the best way to prevent suffering hypothermia.

Unfortunately, the common wisdom handed down to us from past

generations is exactly wrong. Alcohol and caffeine are promoters of hypothermia and only hasten its onset. When hypothermia strikes, the most important rule is to warm the body gradually. Rapid warming will stimulate blood flow to the extremities and pump cold blood from fingers and toes back into the trunk and organs. Anything that stimulates blood flow too rapidly is a potential killer. Among the culprits are hot drinks; caffeine; alcohol; rubbing the hands, feet or head; and exercise—all of the traditional treatments, any one of which may stop the heart with a charge of cold blood.

The correct treatment for hypothermia is to bring the body temperature back gradually. They can't do it themselves, so you must do it for them. The first step is to remove all wet clothes and lay them down in a space protected from cold surfaces and drafts. A sleeping bag on a bunk works best. The second step is to apply warmth. Another person's body heat works along with warm water bottles of about body temperature and warm (not hot) non-caffeine drinks when conscious and able to swallow.

The best advice I have is to take all precautions necessary to prevent hypothermia and always wear a life jacket with your winter clothing. You should consider a float coat or flotation coveralls to provide both flotation and warmth for your cold weather boating. □

Note: I always appreciate feedback and suggestions for future columns. My e-mail address has changed from past editions. Contact me at jmcrosby@adelphia.net



Naturally Wild

story and illustration
by Spike Knuth

Common Merganser

Mergus Merganser

The common or American merganser is the largest of three mergansers that visit Virginia in winter. All three are primarily fish eaters and are often referred to as "fish ducks." All have long, tube-like bills with serrated edges that angle backward and are ideal for catching and holding slippery fish. "Sawbill" is a common name for the mergansers in some areas.

The mergansers are excellent divers and powerful swimmers as well as being strong, swift and direct fliers. In flight they usually fly single file, although occasionally a small flock will form a goose-like vee. All have their feet and legs set back on their bodies, and they are not very mobile on land. They must run over the water to become airborne.

Common mergansers are also known as "gooseander" and "Sheldrake" in some areas. They measure up to 27 inches in length and may weigh 3 pounds. The male is basically black and white above with black wings and white wing speculum. Its

underside is white with a buffy or rusty stained area down the center of its breast and belly. Its black head shines a dark, glossy green which contrasts with its carmine red bill and feet.

The female is gray above, white below, with white wing speculums and a reddish-brown head with a well-defined white throat. The similar but smaller red-breasted merganser hen has a double crest and its white throat blends into its reddish-brown head.

Common mergansers pair up in early spring prior to arriving on their breeding grounds. Freshwater wooded ponds, lakes and riverbanks are their favored habitat. They breed along the northern Great Lakes and north throughout much of Canada from the Maritime Provinces, Ontario, northwest to MacKenzie. They nest in hollow trees, in rock crevices,

on the ground under drooping trees and sometimes in old buildings or even old hawk nests. Anywhere from 6 to 17 buffy eggs are laid. Young are called and tumble from high nests without injury and are immediately led to water.

They are voracious feeders capable of diving, pursuing and catching fish underwater, and usually take fish of 2 to 6 inches long. They will feed in rivers or streams with strong currents with ease.

The common merganser is hardy and cold tolerant. In fact, in many years most of them may never come as far south as Virginia, as long as there is open water and food available. They may never come any farther south than the Ohio River or the Great Lakes. □



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